



Jim Cadd, vice president and resident manager of the Fort James pulp-and-paper mill in Camas, directs an operation that produces 1,300 tons of communications papers and 400 tons of tissue paper a day. Though no longer the only game in town, the company still boasts Clark County's largest payroll.

## Fort James paper mill adapts to new era

*The mill is no longer the only payroll in Camas, and it makes public relations a priority in the changing city*

By RICK BELLA  
THE OREGONIAN

CAMAS — The Sky Ridge Mid School students were positively stumped by the mystery guest who was answering their questions from behind a partition.

Yes, he said, he was a business execu-

tive. But he sometimes wore protective clothing at work.

And, yes, the company turned out products sold at stores.

After dozens of questions, the students in the school's Youth Ambassador program finally began to home in. But it still took them seven guesses to discover that they were talking to Jim Cadd, resident manager of the Fort James mill.

Not long ago, a game of "What's My Line?" with the mill's manager would have been a slam dunk in Camas. He was easily the best-known figure, as

comfortably familiar as a Christmas carol. After all, the mill was by far the largest employer and the fountain of social life in what was a cozy, isolated company town.

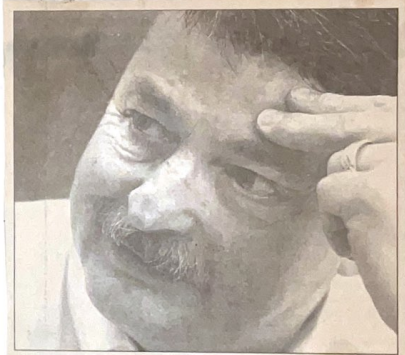
In fact, until 1991, practically all of Camas went to work, broke for lunch and went home to a blast on the mill's whistle.

But now, several large high-tech companies call Camas home, and the city has taken an irreversible turn for the cosmopolitan. Exclusive neighborhoods have

*"I grew up here. I started working here when I was just 18, when we still were the only game in town. But things have changed. Now we do a whole lot more explaining of who we are and what we do."*

JIM CADD,  
RESIDENT MANAGER,  
FORT JAMES' CAMAS MILL

Please see MILL, Page E5



Since assuming the reins of Fort James' Camas mill, Cadd has had to forge a meaningful but diminished role for a company that dominated the town since both were established in 1883. In recent years, Camas has become home to a growing high-tech enclave that now represents a greater cash investment than the mill.

Continued from Page E1

displaced the neighboring prune orchards, bringing in scores of newcomers who don't owe their living, family history or allegiance to the mill.

For its part, Fort James, no longer the city's sole economic lifeline, has been adapting to a diminished role while trying to remain a good corporate citizen.

"I grew up here," said Cadd, 57, a third-generation mill employee. "I started working here when I was just 18, when we still were the only game in town. But things have changed. Now we do a whole lot more explaining of who we are and what we do."

Like holding community meetings to air the company's plans to deal with chemical spills.

Like co-sponsoring an annual fair to promote health and safety.

And like holding meetings to explain the company's air- and water-quality improvements.

"It helps us reach the people who don't work for Fort James," said Jennifer Powell, the mill's special projects director. "In the old days, if you wanted the whole town to know what the company was doing, we just put some fliers out near the time clock."

Camas was founded in 1883, when Henry Pitcock, publisher of The Oregonian, and his associates built the Columbia River Paper Co. mill. Logging crews cut the trees close by.

Through the years, the city and company grew like twins. A series of mergers changed the company's name to Crown Columbia Pulp and Paper, to Crown Villamette, to Crown Zellerbach, to James River and finally, in 1997, to Fort James.

### Mill unionizes in 1930s

Meanwhile, workers voted to unionize during the 1930s, resulting in Clark County's largest payroll — still true today at more than \$100 million a year for about 1,400

employees.

But differences were set aside when the mill's business slumped during the Depression. Shifts were shortened to spread the work around, avoid layoffs and prevent financial calamity.

The collaboration even extended to education.

"In 1958, when the Camas School Board wanted to place a bond issue on the ballot to build the high school, the board members ran it past the mill management first," said Hal Zimmerman, retired publisher of the Camas Post-Record and a former state legislator. "Of course, it was just a courtesy, but they did talk it over."

The company also donated land for the Camas Little League field and for construction of James David Zellerbach Elementary School.

Glenda Schuh remembers when the company provided summer jobs for mill employees' children, who attended college.

"It was like the town's own scholarship program," said Schuh, whose family ran the Farrell & Eddy store downtown for 35 years before closing it in 1998.

Russ McCollister, a former mill manager, remembers when the company dispatched its trucks to tend to city parks or to unplug storm sewers. Even today, the mill's fire department is incorporated as its own fire protection district and provides hazardous-material response for the city.

### Bridge ends isolation

But everything started to change in 1982, when the Glenn Jackson Bridge was built, carrying Interstate 205 across the Columbia River and ending Camas' isolation.

Shortly afterward, the City Council adopted a plan to diversify the city's economy. The result was the emergence of a high-tech enclave that now includes WaferTech, Heraeus Shin-Etsu America, Sharp Microelectronics of the

Americas, Linear Technology, Underwriters Laboratories, Capstone Technology and Furuno.

With those companies came new blood — and a new attitude — in a bustling city with a population of nearly 11,000.

Beth Short moved to Camas three years ago from Seattle with her husband, Jim, a chemical engineer at WaferTech, and their two children. They live in the upscale Lake Pointe development near Lacamas Lake.

"When I first arrived in Camas, I said, 'What is that horrid smell?'" said Short, 39. "Then I found out about the Fort James mill. But I also know they've taken a lot of steps to reduce the smell and they do a lot to help the city. If you don't have Fort James first, you don't get

WaferTech."

Cadd said he expected that Fort James' public profile would continue to evolve. He said he wanted to get out and meet more of the new residents, to explain what the company does and how it works.

"Times change," Cadd said. "It isn't entirely comfortable for us to take on a new role, to have to justify things we — and everybody else in town — used to take for granted. But if you don't change with the times, you get left behind, and that's not what we're all about."

You can reach Rick Bella at 360-896-5718 or 503-294-5900 or by e-mail at rickbella@news.oregonian.com